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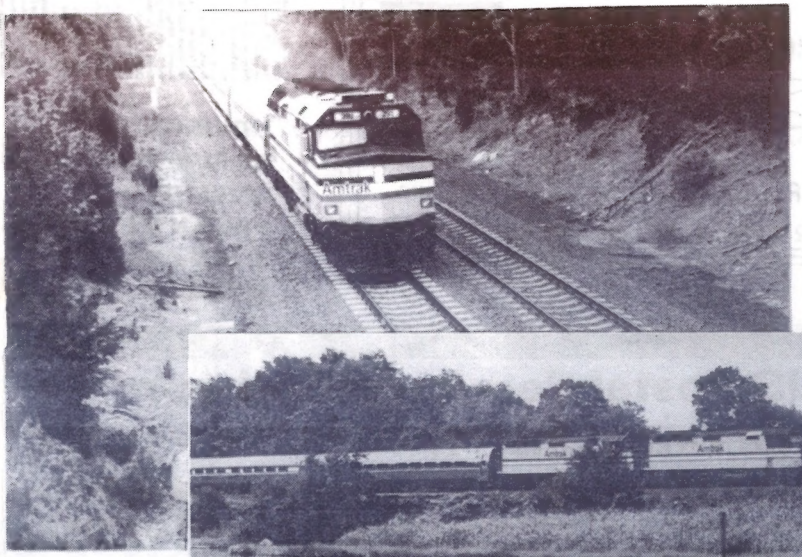

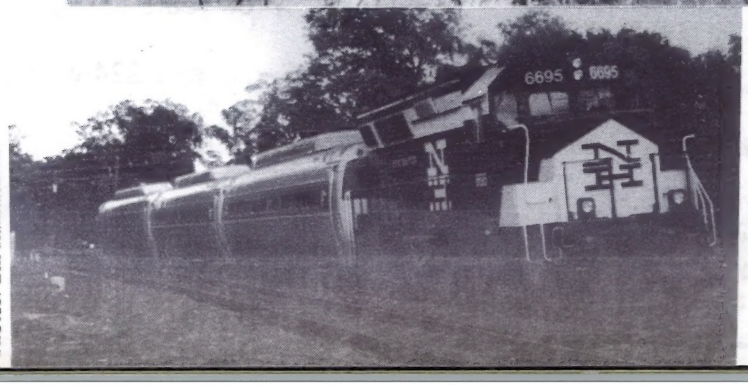

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Ⓡ 11-13-96

ON THE COVER

Amtrak NortheastDirect train 172, a southbound train formerly known as the **Patriot**, has just crossed the Mystic River swing bridge, approaching the Mystic CT Amtrak station, on August 21. Photo by Bill Hakkarinen.

(Rear cover) The IC3 Flexliner performs a demonstration coupling on the move for participants in the recent Oakland-Reno run. Photographed at Sacramento CA on August 7 by RTN. Seen is the rear section of the train, which has uncoupled on the move while passengers were aboard. Then passengers detrained to watch the re-coupling. The forward section of the train is behind the camera.

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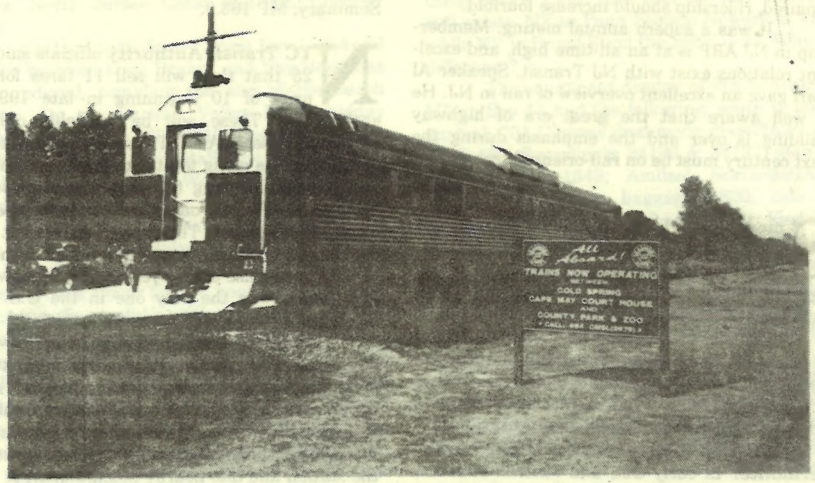
EAST COAST REPORT



One of Cape May Seashore Lines' operable RDCs (they have two). Although the sign indicates that CMSL trains run to Cold Spring, by next year they will enter the heart of Cape May City, a huge tourist ma rket. On Sep 28 a special train was run for the benefit of NJ ARP me mbers at its annual me eting held in Cape May. Sep 28 photo by Bruce J. Russell.

The NJ Association of Railroad Passengers, a NARP affiliate, held its annual meeting in Cape May NJ Sep 28. Main speaker was Al Harf of NJ Transit, who described all the commuter rail and mass transit projects currently in various stages of completion, including Secaucus Transfer, the Hudson River Waterfront Light Rail Line, the Susquehanna RR passenger service restoration and studies on how to proceed in South Jersey.

He also said that the state of NJ now has title to the former Lackawanna RR "Cutoff" across western NJ. Eventually, commuter trains will operate over it as far as Stroudsburg PA, and it will likewise be a component of the so-called "Pocono Corridor." This will involve restoration of intercity passenger service from Penn Station NY to Scranton PA and possibly Binghamton NY. Service last ra in 1971 under the auspices of the Erie Lackawanna RR and terminated in Hoboken. However, today trains can proceed directly into NYC via the Kearny Connection which opened Jun 10.

Mr. Harf painted a generally optimistic picture for passenger railroading in the Garden State. Even the Atlantic City Line was, he reported, showing healthy increases in patronage and ways are being explored to have the casinos pick up part of the tab for its deficits. By 1999 Atlantic city will have at least three more casinos and this will mean more visitors. He would up his remarks by giving a rundown of developments pertaining to the Montclair Connection, which will unite two commuter routes in Montclair and see an extension of electrification to Great Notch. Mr. Harf regretted that legal action by well-organized NIMBYs was stalling completion of this much-needed project. Still he felt that in the long run it will be done.

NJ ARP president Douglas bowen then introduced Tony Macrie, head of the Cape May Seashore Lines RR that began limited passenger service last summer over former Pennsylvania Reading Seashsore Lines trackage in Cape May County. Mr. Macrie announced that the state of NJ had made available to his company a grant of $1.5 million to repair a swing bridge over the Cape May Canal. This will permit trains once again to enter the heart of Cape May City, a major South Jersey tourist mecca that has limited parking. His railroad, which owns nine RDCs, all former PRSL units, sees its major role as a hauler of people from Tuckahoe and Cape May Court House to Cape May City, a distance of about 20 miles.

NJ Transit now owns the rails, but Cape May Seashore Lines has operating rights. Mr. Macrie explained that the long-term goal is to run a dinner train plus connect with the Atlantic City Line at Winslow Jct. The last regularly-scheduled passenger service between the Philadelphia area and Cape May ran in 1981. It was discontinued supposedly because of poor track conditions.

After Mr. Macrie's talk, the attendees were invited to ride one of his two operable RDCs from Cold Spring, just north of Cape May, to Tuckahoe. All the attendees opted for the enjoy-

able train ride. The limited service that ran this past summer attracted higher than anticipated crowds. Once the bridge into Cape May City is repaired, ridership should increase fourfold.

It was a superb annual meting. Membership in NJ ARP is at an all-time high, and excellent relations exist with NJ Transit. Speaker Al Harf gave an excellent overview of rail in NJ. He is well aware that the great era of highway building is over and the emphasis during the next century must be on rail-oriented transit.

—Bruce J. Russell.

Some AEM-7 locos in the NE Corridor are getting the NortheastDirect paint scheme, but without the NortheastDirect wording—just the name "Amtrak". No. 905 or 907 has been seen.

The Boston Herald in an Oct 14 editorial thanked Connecticut for finally issuing its permit for Corridor electrification, adding that "It's high time—Masachusetts, Rhode Island and federal authorities acted long ago."

Custom Class service began on the **Vermonter** in early Oct, and Amtrak took the club-dinette car off the **Adirondack** and shifted it to the **Vermonter**. The state of Vermont had pushed that service on its train.

Metro-North said that it will add more weekend trains and peak service on Dutchess County runs this winter to meet growing demand on the Hudson and Harlem lines. Dutchess Co. patronage is growing faster than anywhere else on M-N. The additions will be on from Oct 27 until Apr 5, 1997. As usual, special schedules will be adopted for Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve on M-N.

M-N president Nelson in mid-Oct proposed a $578.2 million budget for 1997. Revenues, mostly from the farebox, will pay for $307.7 million of expenses, and $179.8 million in subsidies will be needed, 7.2% less than in 1996. Of that amount, $143.4 million will be from the MTA and $36.4 million from Connecticut DOT. Final approval should be given in December.

Virginia Railway Express in Oct was seeking local approvals to purchase 20 bi-level commuter cars by selling $35 million in revenue bonds. Some local officials were skeptical of the equipment plan, saying that VRE ridership has been dropping. However, the figures bandied about do not necessarily indicate steady drops, but rather short-term fluctuations due to temporary conditions. VRE plans to move its headquarters from Springfield to Alexandria VA.

VRE is planning a budget of $21 million for FY 1998, and including a 2% fare increase for single-ride tickets. Regular riders who buy 10-trip or monthly tickets would see no increase. The commuter service wants to expand service to 32 trains from 26, at a cost of $1.3 million.

A signal failure the morning of Oct 4 on CSX delayed VRE trains carrying 1950 commuters, three Amtrak trains and five CSX freights. It lasted 7:05-9:15am from milepost 79 to 110, Quantico to Arlington at the Potomac River on the RF&P subdivision, plus the NS connection at Seminary, MP 103.9.

NYC Transit Authority officials said Oct 25 that they will sell 11 fares for the price of 10 beginning in late 1997 or early 1998. These will be available only to Metrocard users. An MTA official told the NY Times "This is going to attract millions of riders, and it's finally going to make a winner out of Metrocard." So far, only 10% of riders use the electronic fare card. The Times pointed out that the move amounts to a partial rollback of the 25-cent fare increase of last year. Up until now, the NY system was the only one in the U.S. that offered no volume discount.

NYC water mains break once or twice a day on the average. On Oct 25 such a break happened on 60th St between Lexington & 3rd Aves, flooding the busy 59th St & Lexington subway station, shutting down service from 2:15am to 7:50am. Not only water but also sewage ran into the station and into nearby Bloomingdale's.

Transport Workers' Union and the NY MTA Oct 22 agreed on a 3-yr contract. By a slim margin, workers voted for the pact which allows the MTA to eliminate up to 500 cleaners' jobs through attrition and replace them with welfare recipients on a city workfare program. Mayor Giuliani said he will not actually do that.

A fierce storm that formed right over the state rather than blowing in from elsewhere dropped record rains on NY, NJ and CT the weekend of Oct 19. Winds gusting to 81mph were recorded. Commuter train, subway, air and highway service was disrupted. In places, over 8 inches of rain fell. The LIRR had 90-min delays on all its lines, and Metro-North had 45-min delays. On the New Canaan branch, buses were substituted.

A MARC train on the Camden line, headed for Washington on Oct 8, at 5:15pm hit a tractor trailer that became stuck on a crossing near Elkridge MD. The leading cab car derailed but remained upright. There were minor injuries to eight people on the train. The truck driver escaped his cab before the impact, which demolished the "lowboy" truck. Six other MARC trains were blocked by the wreck. The Wash. Post reported that a whimsical sign near the crossing had read "On this site in 1896 nothing happened"—a parody of historical markers. A fire/rescue official said that people may have to change the sign now.

Newark NJ Penn station was almostly completely shut down for 30mins Oct 22 after a bomb threat was received by Amtrak. A fake bomb-shaped package was found.

Boston Green Line service was disrupted for two days the week of Oct 21 due to flooding in underground portions of the line at Prudential Center in Back Bay.

Timetables were reissued Sep 8 for NJ Transit's Raritan Valley, Boonton, Morris & Essex, North Jersey Coast and NE Corridor lines.

On the North Jersey Coast Line, weekend service between Long Branch and Bay Head has been reduced, signaling the end of the beach season. On the Raritan Valley Line, midday High Bridge trains 5705/5710 have been cancelled west of Raritan for installation of welded rail on the single-track line. Work is expected to be finished in mid-October.

The Morris & Essex timetable shows the new MidTown Direct service between Dover and NY Penn Station which now runs on weekends. Trains depart Dover for NY hourly from 5:15am to 8:14pm (be careful—some trains leave at :14!), then 9:59, 10:59 and 11:51. Westbound trains depart NY hourly beginning at 7:50am and until 1:50 the next morning. The 12:50 and 1:50am trains run Sat night, Sun morning only. When I was in NY of Sat, Sep 28, the TV monitor that shows only NJ Transit departures showed Trenton trains at :32, Long Branch trains at :37, and times at :50 had no destinations (Dover trains). How come? The trains had been running for three weeks! I also note that the fare difference still exists. NY to Penn Station Newark is $2.50 while NY to Broad St on the M&E is $3. Why the difference?

The equipment display at White River Jct VT on Sep 14 had the following, south to north: Amtrak 701 Genesis dual-mode diesel/third rail; FL-9 485; Superliners 34136 & 34137; material handling car 1549; Amfleet NortheastDirect 21617; **Vermonter** baggage 1800; café car 43043 with **Vermonter** food display; Viewliner 62028 "Palisades View"; Rutland 260 combine built in the 1800s (used on the **Green Mountain Flyer**; and New England Central 9520. All cars were open for a walk-through except the MHC. Visitors were also allowed to tour the New England Central locomotive.

An Amtrak passenger extra to Hartford, seen at New Haven Sep 28, ran with Shore Line East trainset of three SPVs pushed by one of the "new" GP40s in New Haven colors. Numbers unknown.

—Bob Underwood.

RAIL CANADA

The Transport Minister has backed down on a planned review of passenger rail, reported Transport 2000: "After a tidal wave of letters from Transport 2000 members and supporters, Minister of Transport, David Anderson, cancelled the passenger rail policy review announced by the previous Minister, Doug Young.

"Our members, and our friends in the United States deluged the Minister's office with demanding and knowledgeable requests about the policy review. The last thing the Government wants is to discuss why they are abandoning public transportation users," says David Glastonbury, President of Transport 2000 Canada.

"Instead, this fall, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport will be studying the economic relationship, efficiencies and linkage among transportation, trade and tourism. Hearings will be held across Canada in October and November.

"The initial focus is on the 'renewal' of the national highway system and its relationship to trade and tourism.

"The emphasis on highways may be the Liberals floating the prospect of a new infrastructure program as part of their pre-election strategy. There has been pressure from provinces for more roads, especially from the Liberal governments in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland."

Transport 2000 warned that federal government cutbacks are endangering ferry service throughout Atlantic Canada. Immediately threatened are two ferry services in the Bay of Fundy:

"The *Princess of Acadia* running between Digby N.S. and Saint John N.B. and the *Bluenose*, operating on the Yarmouth, N.S. to Bar Harbor, ME route, are to be privatized. Proposals to take them over [were scheduled by] mid-Sep. The winner or winners will be announced within a month, given an as yet to be determined subsidy for three years and expected to operate the lines for five years."

VIA financial performance by product
(Source: VIA Rail)

	1996	1996	1995	1996	1996	1995
Corridor						
Revenue	70.9	77.6	70.3	10.2	11.6	10.6
Cost	131.1	130.0	133.9	15.6	15.7	17.4
Deficit	-60.2	-52.3	-63.6	-5.4	-4.1	-6.8
Western Transcon						
Revenue	24.7	26.0	23.7	5.5	5.8	5.4
Cost	40.2	40.1	39.4	5.3	5.1	5.4
Deficit	-15.5	-14.2	-15.7	*0.2	0.7	0.0
Eastern Transcon						
Revenue	12.9	12.6	11.7	2.4	2.4	2.1
Cost	26.2	25.7	25.0	3.1	3.1	3.1
Deficit	-13.2	-13.2	-13.2	-0.6	-0.6	-1.0
System (includes remotes and corporate costs)						
Revenue	116.3	125.0	116.1	19.3	21.4	19.5
Cost	260.0	259.8	267.8	30.9	30.7	33.4
Deficit**	-158.4	-147.2	-163.1	-14.0	-10.4	-14.9

* Positive contribution
** Total operating deficit (includes restructuring costs)

THIS ISSUE of RTN bears the cover date of Oct 18, but it contains news that is updated through Oct 26.

MIDWEST REPORT

The Missouri Highway and Transportation Dept this summer issued a route brochure for the St. Louis-Kansas City service. It's a small 12-page booklet with a color cover carrying a photo of one of the route's trains. Besides descriptions of locations on the route, it gives visitor's info phone numbers for some of them, and public transit phone numbers for St. Louis, Jefferson City, Sedalia and Kansas City.

The Hiawatha Service, Chicago-Milwaukee, has an off-peak fare promotion that's good through Nov 15. Under it, three daily round trips offer roundtrip fares of $18—the normal fare is $38. Fares on other trains and on weekends remain at $38. Other fare cuts were in effect earlier this year, but were reportedly not being advertised while negotiations over the fate of the trains were underway. Illinois had declined to renew its portion of train subsidies, but Amtrak and Wisconsin officials reached an agreement in principle to keep the trains running for another year. Previously, Wisconsin paid $3 million a year and Illinois $1 million to help support the trains. Wisconsin has been using federal air pollution and traffic mitigation funds for that purpose and will continue to do so. Reportedly Hiawatha ridership dropped 27% last year after fares went up 50%, but patronage has been gradually increasing, reports said.

Higher-speed rail trials began in southwest Michigan Oct 11 on parts of the lines there owned by Amtrak. An Oct 11 ceremony and display of Amtrak equipment took place in Kalamazoo, and a special VIP train ran a round trip to Niles. Speaking at the Kalamazoo event were FRA chief Jolene Molitoris, US Congressman Fred Upton, Amtrak Intercity head Mark Cane, Dan Pickett of the Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen, and the mayors of Kalamazoo and Niles. The project involves trying out an improved signal system that allow 110mph speeds on a currently 79mph track.

The FRA contributed $3 million to this project in October, for a total of $9 million from that source. Amtrak and Michigan have put in $12.6 million. That money goes towards installation, track upgrading and labor for a 77-mile segment of track. The initial part being tested consists of 20 miles between Kalamazoo and Niles. The FRA developed the system under its Next Generation Positive Train Control program. The system in Michigan is called an Incremental Train Control System, being built by Harmon Industries. It uses high-tech elements to help speed up trains—digital radio connections, and a computer and database aboard each train to assist in train control. The digital radio links are used to operate grade crossing signals in sufficient time to allow high-speed trains to pass safely.

The system is actually economical, as it costs about half that of a conventional track upgrading procedure. Once the 20 miles of line have been tested adequately, work will proceed on the remaining 57 miles. It is expected that revenue operations under the system will begin in the middle of next year.

The Ohio Dept of Development works to promote business transportation, running a program called "Access Ohio." In a colorful print promo for the program is prominently pictures an Amtrak train, with engine 338, along with other transportation modes, superimposed on a map of Ohio. Twelve stations once again are served in Ohio, points out Marvin Doudna, but the capital, Columbus, is the largest city not on an Amtrak line.

Northwestern University in Evanston IL will hold Nov 19-21 a seminar on Information Technology for Logistics and Transportation.

CARS & CONSISTS

***Pere Marquette**, train 371, Chicago Oct 17: engine 5 (P-42); cars Hi-level coach 39945, Superliner coach 34072. (First revenue run for P42 engine no. 5. It arrived in Chicago Oct 15 on train 29 and left on train 370 Oct 16, returning Oct 17 on train 371.) —George Danchisen.

***San Diegan Express**, train 771, Glendale CA Oct 7: cab control coach 8308 "Mount San Gorgonio", coach 8014 "Colorado River", coach 8007 "Russian River", diner 8803 "San Gabriel Valley", engine 2004.

***Coast Starlight**, train 14, Glendale CA Oct 7: engines 800 & 806 (AMD-103); cars 1701 baggage (modified Budd coach, only such car seen with "Amtrak" in script, not block, lettering), Superliner IIs 39022 transition-dorm-sleeper, sleepers 32091 "Minnesota", 32081 "Illinois" and 32117 "Wisconsin", Hi-level lounge 39970 (Pacific Parlor Car), 38057 diner, 33036 lounge, Superliner coach 34096 (with new striping), Superliner II coaches 34113, 34504 (with Kiddie room), and 34106.—George Shelly.

***Vermonter**, train 56, NY Sep 24: engine 941 (AEM-7, off at New Haven), 288 (F40, on at New Haven); cars 9640 cab control car, Amfleet I 44188 coach, 48240 café-dinette, 44664 & 44641 handicap coaches with NEDirect stripes & logo.

***Adirondack**, train 68, Port Kent NY Sep 26: engine 260 (F40, replaced by 487 & 485, FL-9s, at Albany); Amfleet I coach 21095 deadhead until Albany, 7004 coach "Ticonderoga", 3111 cafeteria-lounge "L'Auberge Laurentian", 7005 coach (unnamed, nameplate blank), 7617 coach (deadhead until Albany).

***California Zephyr**, train 5, Chicago Sep 29: engines 519 (Dash-8) & 292 (F40); cars 1449 MHC off at Denver, 1428 MHC, 1245 baggage, Superliner IIs 39043 transition dorm-sleeper & 32102 "North Dakota" sleeper, Superliner slprs with new stripes 32021 & 32059, Superliner IIs 38044 diner & 33041 lounge, Superliner coach 34062, Superliner coach with new stripes 34045, Superliner coach-baggage w/ new stripes 31042.

***Lake Shore Limited**, train 49, Sandusky OH Oct 8: engines 268 & 388 (F40s); cars 1459 & 1455 MHCs, 1215 baggage, slpr 2886 "Pacific Scene", coaches 4606, 25088 & 25027, lounge 28012, diner 8501 "Silver Tureen", coaches 25085, 25052 & 4644, Viewliner sleepers 62003 "Bay View" & 62002 "Autumn View", 1615 bag-dorm. Same, Oct 12: engines 380 & 388 (F40s); cars 1140 baggage for mail, 1455 MHC, 1215 working baggage, 2563 "Silver Dale" sleeper, coaches 4005, 25115 & 25009, lounge 28005, diner 8513, coaches 25099, 25018 & 25069, Viewliner slprs 62014 "Imperial View" & 62033 "Scenic View", crew sleeper 2436 "Pacific Crest", 1720 baggage. Same, Oct 13: engines 409 & 313 (F40s); cars deadhead Viewliner slprs 62038 "Spring View" & 62039 "Stream View", MHCs 1504 & 1528, baggage 1736, slpr 2933 "Pacific Sky", coaches 25074, 25094 & 25040, lounge 28000, diner 8527, coaches 25078, 25103 & 25015, Viewliner slprs 62012 "Harbor View" & 62007 "Colonial View", crew sleeper 2891 "Pacific Cape", baggage 1166. —George Danchisen.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Nov 2-14: Old Mexico Pacific mainline & branches. Ft Worth-Chihuahua via Ojinaga; side trip to Nuevo Casas Grandes; Guadalajara; entire Nacozari RR, etc. Priv cars Caritas, Cimarron River & Prairie Rose. See Web page www.midcoast.com/~caritas/ or call 612-922-7259. $3695.High Iron Travel,Box50116 MplsMN

Nov 12-21: Steamboat American Queen, New Orleans & Deep South. 2-nite MS River cruise, slpr on Crescent to New Orleans from NEC, fly back to Newark. Incl all meals, 2 nites Hotel, etc. $1995 up. RR Psgr Servs. Box 652 Union NJ 07083. 908-688-7277.

Dec 13-15: Chicago Before Christmas by Train. From Birmingham, Royal Oak, Dearborn MI. PalmerHouse hotel, optional subway to O'Hare; Water Tower Place, dinner banquet, tour Chicago, Lake Cities to Detroit. $375 up. Bluewater Mich. Chapter, NRHS, PO Box 296, Royal Oak MI 48068-0296. 810-399-7963.

Dec 14: 34th Street Express, charter Amtrak shoppers special Boston-NYC on a preferred schedule: lv 7am, return 11pm. View Christmas Carol at Paramount or Radio City Xmas Spect. $65. Mystic Valley Rwy Society Inc, Box 486, Hyde Park MA 02136. 617-361-4445

Nov 9-11: Texas Eagle excursion to Dallas. 1400mis on Superliners. $349-$618. "AAR Classic Rail Ride." Lv St Louis 12:30am, back 7am, Atk station 550 S.16. American Association of Railroaders, Inc. 4351 Holly Hills Blvd, St Louis MO 63116-2255. Phone 314-752-3148.

Send large SASE to addresses. One listing in RTN is free. It must give specific dates of operation. Rail Travel News. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709-0007

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Amtrak may be a beleaguered shadow of a once-mighty rail transportation system, as its critics argue, but it still has plenty of friends in high places who in an election year are ready to dig deep into their pockets to give the system new life.

"Case in point is the fact that a six-month, $22.5 million reprieve has been approved by Congress for four routes...

"But the irony of this move is that it points to the fact that Amtrak, rather than dying of unpopularity, is being victimized by the fact that it can't provide the service it needs to keep alive and grow.

"Thanks in part to Congress' underfunding of Amtrak's capital budget, the system will be forced to shift sleeping and dining cars from the Broadway Limited, which also runs across Ohio, to the Lake Shore Limited, the Chicago-New York run, because the system doesn't have enough cars to provide full service on all runs.

"Absent in recent years has been aggressive White House leadership. It is needed to push hard for more money for a system that will continue to gain passengers as the highways become even more crowded and the long lines in and around airports push stressed-out travelers to seek other travel options..."

—Editorial in The Blade (Toledo OH) Oct 11.

WEST COAST REPORT

The through coaches on the **Coast Starlight** between Seattle and San Diego will start Nov 10, as noted last issue. Two cars should operate through, northbound as part of train 571, leaving San Diego 6:18am weekdays and on #769 at 6am weekends and holidays. Southbd, lv L.A. as train 511 daily at 9:35pm, ar San Diego 12:15am, same as the present train 786. The latter will be changed to lv Santa Barbara 4pm as #784. Train 571 will be an express, using California coaches. Train 573 will become 773, an express with Cal cars. Two express **San Diegans**, with Cal cars, will run L.A.-San Diego: #580 at 4:13pm and 782 at 5:10pm. Additional Cal cars or Superliners will run as necessary L.A. and south on #511, as this uses the time slot of #786. Amtrak's computer shows baggage service on #511—perhaps only for **Starlight** passengers? And is there food service? This new pattern results in 9 southbd and 8 northbd trains L.A.-San Diego.

California baggage coaches are now being delivered, with car 8202 "San Diego Bay" running as a coach on #712/717 Oct 11-12. Diner 8809 "Owens Valley" was scheduled to arrive in L.A. on train 3 Oct 12. One **San Joaquin** remains with Horizon equipment. Not all the Cal diners are in service; Superliner and Hi-level diners and Superliner snack coaches are filling in on various equipment sets. NARP reported that Cal cars are arriving at the rate of two per month and should all be here by May.

Nine Amfleet coaches and two café cars were sent to Seattle for use on annual weekend specials Portland-Seattle. Trains should run nonstop, lv Portland 7:30am, ar Seattle 11:20. The return from Seattle is 4:45pm, ar 8:35. Remaining dates are Oct 27, Nov 3, 10, 24 & Dec 8. Two specials also run Portland-Corvallis Oct 19 and Nov 23: lv Portland 9:15am, ar noon; lv 5:10pm, ar 8:15. Roundtrip fare is $50.

New Metrolink timetable takes effect Nov 11, with only minor changes. Train 901 will extend north to Burbank Airport. As part of the reconstruction of the Terminal Tower area, it had been planned to add 1-3mins to all trains at L.A. However, this plan has been dropped, and instead a timetable note will say that delays may occur during construction. The project start has been delayed until Jan or Feb. Ridership keeps growing. Sep was 2% higher than Aug, and a 21% increase over Sep 95. The first 10 days of Oct were up 3% over Sep. On Oct 9 Orange County had a new high of 5137, and San Bernardino a new high of 7207 Oct 10. The first year of Sat service attracted 61,000, exceeding estimates by 62% and fare estimates by 59%, while costs were 12% under budget. The needed subsidy was $137,000 or 44% less than budgeted. More Sat routes could be in the offing.

While Orange County papers said trains will run Orange Co.-Palm Springs this winter, don't count on it soon, since track usage and costs must be negotiated with UP. Cost will run high going this far from regular Metrolink routes, crew and service facilities. As for commute service Victorville-L.A., BNSF is not overjoyed at the prospect, due to its growing Cajon Pass traffic. —Ed Von Nordeck.

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California Intercity High Speed Rail Commission held a hearing in San Francisco Oct 23 on the plan for a Los Angeles-Bay Area high speed train. Their present plan calls for a 200+ mph line from L.A. to Bakersfield and up the San Joaquin Valley, paralleling Hwy 99, to just south of Stockton, where a branch would continue to Sacramento while the main line would turn west to run through the Altamont Pass to Pleasanton and Fremont, crossing S.F. Bay on a new Dumbarton bridge, and serving the Peninsula cities of Palo Alto, Redwood City and Millbrae before terminating in San Francisco. A branch would run to San Jose. A southern branch would connect L.A. and San Diego.

At the meeting, mayors and other officials argued for proper inclusion of their cities. S.F. Mayor Willie Brown said that his city will commit to a new station at one of several locations including downtown S.F. Mayor Harris of Oakland argued that the Bay Area terminus should be Oakland rather than S.F. San Jose felt slighted by being put on a spur line. Sacramento has been making noises that it should be the main N. Calif. terminus and the Bay Area a spur line. Building the various branches would increase the project's cost by 50% but increase riders by 100% officials said.

After hearings in Fresno and L.A., the commission will present its recommendations to the governor and legislature. Then a new entity will be formed in Jan, a High Speed Rail Authority to move ahead on the project. One of the first steps to be taken will be to obtain funding. The ideas of a statewide one-quarter-cent sales tax or a 5-cent gas tax increase are the primary contenders. One of them could be placed on the ballot two years from now. Cost estimates for a basic L.A.-S.F. system are $12 billion, or $18 billion with extensions.

A South Line for Sacramento's light rail system has been unexpectedly threatened by NIMBYs who want a wall built along the planned line that follows UP tracks. At an Oct 16 public hearing, other supporters abhorred the late-date complaint. A Regional Transit decision on it will be made Dec 16.

Amtrak **San Diegans** serving Santa Barbara starting in Nov will have a new station stop at Grover Beach, between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara. The location is 150 Grand Avenue at Pacific Coast Highway (Route 1) in Grover Beach. The stop serves the "five-cities" area that is rapidly growing and was in need of rail service. Grand opening for the station is Nov 2 at 10am.

October 19 saw Metrolink's special Chowder Train to San Clemente Beach, the last beach train of the year. The 9-car charter train was sold out. There will be no Metrolink service on Nov 28, Thanksgiving Day, nor on Dec 25 and Jan 1. Nov 29 will be a Family Day on Metrolink when valid monthly pass holders can bring up to three persons, including children, on Metrolink without charge. Dec 7 will find 5th annual Holiday trains on the Riverside and San Bernardino Lines (special ticket price of $7 roundtrip or "buy 4 get 1 free" family pack—must be purchased in advance), and similarly Dec 14 on the Santa Clarita and San Bernardino Lines, and Dec 21 & 28 on the San Bernardino Line. From Dec 26 through Dec 31 there will be a Holiday Treat promotion, similar to the Family Day above. Metrolink and the L.A. County Superior Courts now offer a train ride to people serving jury duty. A press conference about this was held Oct 24.

"Amtrak's San Diegan Emporium" now offers several collectibles: a brass lapel pin in a series "The Historic Stations of the San Diegan Line", showing LAUS and the **San Diegan Express**, for $20; the first Amtrak West Christmas ornament, only 500 produced in pewter, with original artwork showing the **Starlight** and mountain scenery, with the Amtrak logo and message on the reverse, for $30; and a Christmas button/pin, a replica of the Christmas ornament, for $6. Orders go to 1000 E. Santa Ana Blvd, Box 101, Santa Ana CA 92701, and $5 must be added for shipping.

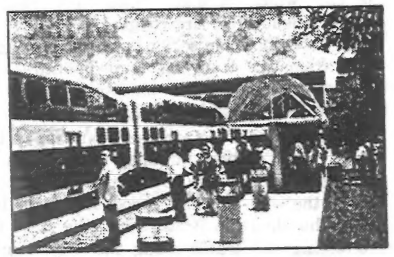
Seattle's Regional Transit Authority has published a tabloid-size informational paper on its 10-year regional transit system plan. The plan is named "Sound Move" and will be on the Nov 5 ballot. It consists of a mixture of light rail, commuter rail, HOV expressway, regional express bus route, and "community gateways" (connection points). Traffic is bad in the Seattle area, and by 2010 an estimated 1.4 million more people will live there. The population has grown 50% in the years that RTN has been publishing. "About 258,000 trips are made each day in the Puget sound region using public transit. With Sound Move in place, total transit system ridership is estimated to increase by 50%; and by year 2010 as many as 40% of all rush-hour trips on major highways would be made by transit or carpooling."

"...The plan includes 25 miles of light rail with 26 stations within walking distance of major regional destinations... The central I-5 travel corridor was selected for a light rail line because it is the most congested area in the region with little or no room to expand freeway capacity. Arterial streets along the corridor are also congested.

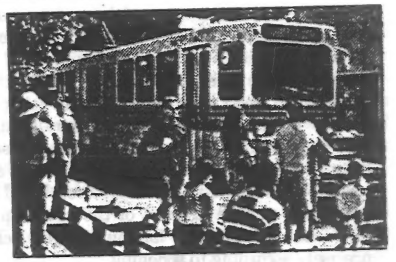
"The proposed north-south light rail system would serve the region's highest concentration of homes and jobs. About half a million people live along this corridor and about 300,000 people work or attend college along the proposed line. The line would double corridor capacity, attracting an estimated 100,000 plus riders a day (almost four times the current ridership of Portland's 15.1-mile MAX line). This line is also the most cost-effective part of the region's envisioned long-range rail system. The RTA estimates that about 32 million riders would use the system each year, collectively saving about 5 million hours of travel time annually."

"...The commuter rail component would add two-way rush-hour service using existing railroad tracks between Everett, Mukilteo, Edmonds, Seattle, Green River Valley communities, Tacoma and Lakewood... The 81-mile system includes 14 stations (and three provisional stations if funding permits) linking major destinations in Snohomish, Pierce and King counties..."

Estimated 10-year costs are $3.9 billion, paid by the following revenue sources: local taxes $1.98 billion, bonding $1.052 billion, federal sources $727 million and farebox and other sources $155 million.



Investing in Sound Move



On track — investing in rail

From New York to California Via Vermont

By Gene Poon

Sep 24: We await Train **56**, the Northbound **Vermonter,** in New York's Metropolitan Lounge, after arriving on the first Metroliner of the day. I can't really say much new about Metroliner service; it is a reliable service that nearly always delivers what it promises, including precise timekeeping, convenient scheduling, and, in Club Service, unobtrusive attention to the passenger. Today, some were greeted by their first names, and the attendant even remembered their regular menu selections!

I chose the French toast, and my wife the breakfast sandwich, which we finished just as the train cleared Newark. Arrival in Penn Station was 7mins early. Our car, half-club and half-coach, had a full first-class section. The other end was for deadheading employees only, and the door to the rest of the train was locked.

The attendant in the lounge advised us that she normally does not call the **Vermonter,** but that she would try to remember. She does, and we are first in line at the boarding escalator when Train 56 is called. Entering, we find that the seats in each half of every coach face toward the center of the car. We choose to sit in the control cab car, which is just behind the AEM-7 locomotive, in a rear-facing seat, avoiding the piers between the small Amfleet windows. Our intention is to be facing forward and to have a good view when the train is running through Vermont.

Exactly on time, Train **56** is on its way. We encounter some minor delays, principally in the Bridgeport CT area, where the elevated railway viaduct is being rebuilt, and new catenary poles already gleam brightly. Still, we are moving along smartly, easily outracing autos on the congested toll highway paralleling the Metro-North right of way. A short pause just before entering the station in New Haven allows us to look over the newly demotored Budd **SPV-2000** cars spotted in front of the car shop. We are into the station for our engine change precisely according to schedule.

Passengers are invited to stretch a bit while watching our AEM-7 being removed from the head end, while our F40PH diesel goes onto the rear. After coupling up the diesel, our engineer walks the length of the train to enter the control cab, one from which America's first high-speed Metroliner trains were operated in the late sixties. Today, of course, the remaining Metroliner cars are demotored cab control cars, and engineers on the Vermonter route are justifiably anxious regarding the sixty-eight grade crossings on the New Haven to Palmer MA portion of the route.

Leaving New Haven, we are treated to such uplifting sights as a scrapyard and a women's undergarment factory before turning north onto the Connecticut Valley Line, which is no Northeast Corridor. Speed is limited to 79mph and the single-track right-of-way is lined by commercial and residential development, as well as a large freight yard at Hartford. The scenery does improve, as near Windsor CT the line runs along the Connecticut River, following it all the way into Springfield MA. We pause again while another P40 and a string of Amfleet clear the station, and then take our turn at the platform.

Smokers only get eight minutes today, as the stop is shortened so we can leave on time. Eastward on Conrail's Boston and Albany line, we get a chance to learn that Springfield is the home of "Absorbine, Jr." (according to a large sign atop a brick factory just east of the station) before the train speeds out of town. At Palmer, Mass., the **Vermonter** leaves Conrail and goes onto New England Central, in a move which takes 13 minutes and the hand-throwing of a series of switches. We get a look at Palmer, which features a model train store, combined with a card store, alongside the Conrail-N.E.C. interchange track. From here on, the train reverses its direction; the F40 leads, and our cab car is on the rear.

Northbound on New England Central, we are suddenly aware of how smooth Amtrak/ Conrail track has been. Despite lower speeds, the ride is rough and bouncy, even in our control cab car, which normally rides well (the Am-coaches ahead of us are rough and bouncy, and jiggly, as well). Even so, we enjoy the trip, as the views from this train are truly beautiful. We alternate between dense hardwood forests and grassy meadows, under partly cloudy skies. The towns along the route are heartwarming in their charm, and station buildings vary from the impressive edifice at White River Junction to the hole in the wall--literally, a door in a large brick factory building - in Brattleboro. We meet some interesting rail traffic along the way, too: the Green Mountain Flyer, a tourist run featuring heavyweight coaches and an Alco road switcher, and a New England Central freight, with brand-

SUGARBUSH VERMONT EXPRESS at The Burlington VT yards of the Vermont Railway. Photos by the author.

new Superliner 11 coaches, a Vermont product fresh from the Bombardier plant at Barre, on the rear end.

While admiring the scenery, we have lunch. We get the special **Vermonter** box lunches, one a turkey sandwich, the other roast beef. Both feature products made exclusively in Vermont, although the idea of Vermont-stvie tortilla chips is a bit peculiar, as is the execution.

The Connecticut River has made its re-appearance. The **Vermonter** crosses it several times, taking in Amtrak's only station stop in the state of New Hampshire before veering back into Vermont. Meanwhile, the train crew, which has been on this route since the Sep 10, 1995 inaugural of the **Vermonter,** is cordial and in good spirits. This is a happy train, one which reflects the warmth of its surroundings and the relaxed ambiance which is the State of Vermont.

At 6:40pm, Train 56 glides smoothly to a stop in Essex Junction, the stop for Burlington. After a few minutes for baggage work (the conductor does the honors), the **Vermonter** is off to its terminus at St. Albans, just as our hotel van pulls up beside the station.

Our hotel, the Inn at Essex, provides courtesy car service to the Amtrak station and all local points. This is only the beginning of a most memorable stay. The Inn is a first-class luxury hotel in every way, featuring restaurants staffed by the new England Culinary Institute. The combination of a college-level learning establishment with fine lodgings is symbiotic. We note the same warmth and grace which we experienced aboard the **Vermonter.**

While in Burlington, we check out Vermont's other tourist train, the **Sugarbush Vermont Express,** which runs from Burlington to Middleboro using Vermont Railway GP38 power, and mostly ex-Santa Fe streamlined cars. Like the Green Mountain Flyer route, the right-of-wav is the former Rutland Railroad. Train service, coordinated with shuttle services in lineside communities, is heavily promoted by area tourism agencies. Three roundtrips make up the **Sugarbush** schedule, though daily service is operated only during the fall foliage season. There also is talk of commuter rail along the same route, and perhaps even Amtrak service, an extension of the planned **Ethan Allen,** a New York-Rutland VT train to operate via Albany and Whitehall NY in late 1996.

Sep 26, 1996: Our short Vermont visit concludes with a ride to the ferry pier in downtown Burlington, to board the Lake Champlain ferry to Port Kent NY. The reason for the boat ride, aside from the sheer beauty of the crossing of these historic waters, is that Port Kent is a seasonal stop for Amtrak's **Adirondack.** From the pier in Port Kent it is a short quarter-mile walk to the Canadian Pacific right-of-way and the newly-built wood shelter which is the station where we await southbound Train 68.

At 1:36pm an F40PH, Amcoach, and four Heritage Fleet cars--no Custom Class (discontinued on Sep 22)--swing into view. We find the Amcoach and the last Heritage coach closed, and settle into the second car of the train, number 7004, named "Ticonderoga", one of the **Adirondack's** Heritage coaches formerly in use in "Clocker" service between New York and Philadelphia (and originally delivered in 1952 for Pennsy's **Congressional** and **Senator).** They are attractive enough in appearance, with light mauve upholstery and bright, cheery light gray walls. The large windows make for easier viewing of the scenery, but the closely-spaced

(continued on page 14)

SOL to EMY: The Return Trip

By Jim Russell

Last issue I described my late-Sep Amtrak trip to Southern California. On Sep 30 I began the return trip at Solana Beach by boarding **San Diegan** 775, which left 5mins late at 9:11am on a foggy but mild day. The train, a mix of Amfleet and Horizon cars, was like the southbound 786 I had ridden earlier very well patronized, and moved along quickly.

At San Juan Capistrano, which we reached at 9:56, I noticed that the station has an interesting location at the end of a downtown business street, but fronting on a semi-rural area of charming houses and small shops and with a nearby "mini-farm" that offers pony rides. Not far past the station is an actual orange grove.

At Santa Ana (10:24am) the air was starting to look suspiciously like smog, although it could have been largely ocean haze. At Anaheim at 10:32 I could barely read the temperature and time display across the stadium parking lot just across the tracks, due to the haze. The temperature was 72. The Fullerton station has a big pedestrian bridge across the tracks. At 11am we met a southbound **San Diegan** (train 574), and just three minutes behind it a Santa Fe piggyback freight.

As one nears L.A., there are always interesting Amtrak equipment spottings to be made. At 11:11 we crossed the Los Angeles River, which to my surprise contained quite a bit of water, and then three minutes later passed a trainset in a washer—engine 809 and a 500-series unit, with five Superliners and private car "Santa Cruz". We then saw Amtrak F40 engine 231 in Operation Lifesaver paint and a Horizon dinette (no. 53504, I think) named "San Luis Obispo". The tall buildings of downtown L.A. were almost hidden in the smog/haze. We reached L.A. Union Station at 11:20am, on time.

Here there would be a 2-hour wait for the bus connection to Bakersfield and **San Joaquin** 717. I accepted a ride on an electric golf cart through the pedestrian tunnels and into the big station. I found a vacant table and pulled out my brown bag lunch, purchasing a drink at a café.

My only real criticism of this trip concerns customer communication here at LAUS. For people making Thruway bus connections here—and there were a lot of them today—there is very poor communication from Amtrak about how to make the connection. The passenger is left on his own when instead he could be given a printed flyer by the conductor outlining where and when to find his bus. At least the conductor or some other employee could tell connecting passengers what to do. Various Amtrak employees around the station must be interrupted frequently with passenger questions like this. It is not at all obvious where to find the buses, and once you have located the bus loading zone, there are no informative signs, and the bus drivers don't say anything unless asked. Amtrak West needs to fix this big seam in what should be a seamless trip. Whenever you add elements of uncertainty to a trip, you throw in stumbling blocks that will cause travelers to avoid the trip in the future.

The Thruway bus leaves LAUS at 1:20. A line had formed at the loading area. A Thruway bus pulled up at 1:10 and the driver emerged but made no move to load passengers. While we stood around in the very warm sun, a second bus pulled in about 50 feet away. It, unlike the first, bore a Bakersfield destination sign, but was not in Thruway paint. Now two lines had formed and eventually we surmised that both buses were going to Bakersfield—there was no announcement. We boarded bus no. two. Each bus was soon filled to about 70% of capacity. The first bus left at 1:26 and ours at 1:28, a little late. Two brief stops for traffic signals were made just outside the station grounds, and then it would be totally nonstop driving for almost two hours until we were into the Bakersfield city limits.

We were climbing the Tehachapi Mountains by about 2:15. Soon we were traveling through an area that had been burned in recent brush fires. For about a mile of that drive, the highway had been recently repaved, as if the fire had melted the original pavement. At 2:42 we passed the sign marking the summit of Tejon Pass, elevation 4144 feet.

Then we began a sharp downhill ride. A sign indicated 39 miles to Bakersfield and warned of five miles of 6% downgrade ahead. Trucks here have their own 35mph lane, with a runaway truck ramp at one point.

Off to the right, beyond a pretty blue lake, a grass fire was burning, creating a large cloud of smoke that ascended vertically and then blew northward. On the downgrade we passed Thruway bus no. one that had left ahead of us. We were soon off the grade and onto the flat San Joaquin Valley. A sign warned of "Severe dust area next 40 miles." What we saw was not dust but masses of smoke from the grass fire back in the mountains. We were among vineyards and then acres and acres of cotton, the white bolls looking about ready for harvest.

At 3:13 we passed a sign, "Pumpkin Center next exit", but there were no pumpkins in sight. At 3:15 we were officially within the Bakersfield city limit, and a minute later bus no. one passed us. We pulled into the Amtrak station at 3:25, 10mins early.

The Bakersfield temperature seemed about 100 degrees. Almost at once our **San Joaquin** train was seen pulling in from the yards. California engine 2001 was leading, with Superliner II coach-baggage car 31047, the Custom Class car, and five California cars: diner 8802 "Sacramento Valley", coaches 8013 "Klamath River", 8022 "Pit River", 8012 "San Lorenzo River", and cab control coach number unrecorded.

Since I had walked toward the rear of the train to record the consist, I happened to be by the only door that opened, and was the first one aboard. I chose an upstairs seat at a table for four on the right side. The train soon began to move again in the pulling direction, stopping after 50 feet to allow a late-arriving young woman to board. A station employee helped her aboard with her luggage. Then we were on our way, in the other direction in push move, leaving at 3:53, three minutes late.

The conductor made an incredibly long-winded announcement. Among the topics covered was the fact that lower-level seats are for handicapped and seniors only. There were fierce warnings about smoking or walking through the train without shoes.

At 4:45 we stopped briefly to meet train 714, running late. Beyond Corcoran we watched a crop-dusting plane doing its work to the left of the tracks.

We went to the diner for a snack, to initiate our first revenue experience with these new cars. There is a snack bar, and behind it the sit-down dining section. A long line had formed to buy snacks. I would assume that business is better than before, as Amtrak West now has a much more interesting and extensive array of snack items, provided by a private concessionaire headquartered near the Oakland Airport. For example, you usually couldn't buy ice cream at Amtrak counters, but now there is a selection of items that includes Dove bars and It's Its (a favorite in the Bay Area). The concessionaire reportedly loads the food items aboard and picks up the remainders after the trains' runs, so Amtrak avoids the old problem of unexplained losses of merchandise.

At 6:05 we were into Fresno, now about 15mins late. Before we left that station, southbound **San Joaquin** 716, on time, pulled in with its Horizonliner equipment. A trainwoman passed by and noticed a copy of RTN on the table. "Where did you get that?" she asked excitedly. She hadn't seen it since the Emeryville newsstand, where she had purchased copies, had folded last year. It was the only source of what was really happening in Amtrak, she said.

During the afternoon and evening I had long conversations with my tablemate, Angela, a black woman attorney from L.A. She was undoubtedly one of the brightest persons I have ever met, and of course was smart enough to know that bringing her laptop computer on the train was a great way to get work done without the routine interruptions of office work.

At 6:30 I decided it was time to try dining in the new "Sacramento Valley". I was told to sit anywhere, and chose a table for two on the left side. These diners are charming, very different from other American dining cars, with a variety of seating arrangements to suit the mood of the passenger. Many tables featured gooseneck lamps attached to the wall and the chairs were more like restaurant chairs than railroad chairs.

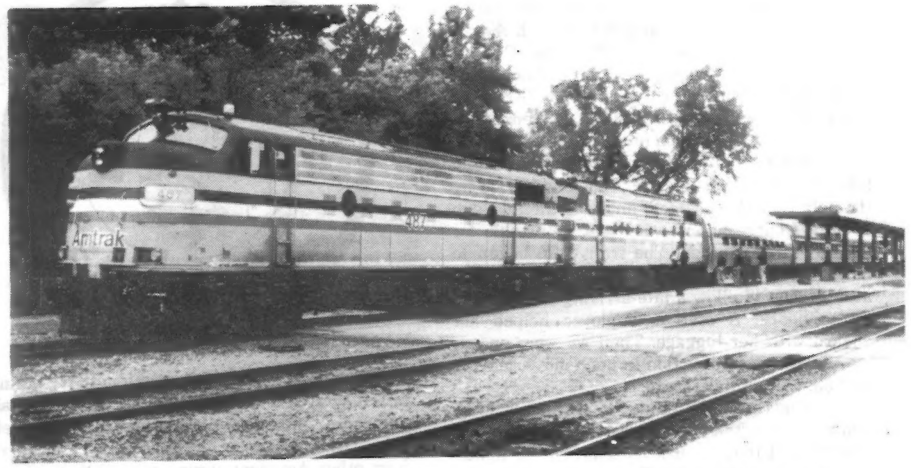
The dinner menu selections were: roasted half chicken, $8.50; baked meat loaf, $6.75; Italian combination (lasagna-manicotta), $6.50; old-fashioned macaroni and cheese, $5.75, Caesar salad, $6.75, and a children's spaghetti and meat-balls, $3.75. Having had a lot of chicken recently, I ordered the meat loaf. As it turned out, I might have been happier with the chicken, for the meat loaf dinner proved to be an odd combination of culinary styles, consisting of two slabs of what seemed like hamburger, with a strong smoky sauce, al dente vegetables and a hunk of pita bread. The tableware was equally an odd mix of metal, glass, paper, china and plastic. But the meal was fun and enjoyable.

During dinner I witnessed a spectacular and unusual sunset, with the sun descending into a layer of valley haze that filtered it into a solid orange ball, sliced two or three times across the middle with thin bands of clouds, so that it looked like an orange sliced into pieces. As it lowered, it produced a beautiful suffusion of lavender-pink above it.

At 7:07 we were reaching Merced as I was ordering a dessert called "Gourmet Brownie Hash". The entire dinner was very reasonably priced, and the drink I had with it was perfectly made.

We were into busy Stockton at 8:15, Antioch at 8:56, Martinez at 9:23, Richmond at 9:58, and Emeryville, where I detrained, at 10:11, or 34mins late. It was the end of another memorable trip, one that showed the great advances in rail service and infrastructure that have been made recently in California.

NY TO CALIFORNIA (continued from page 11)



Train 68 , the ADIRONDACK, at Albany-Rensselaer NY on Sep 26 with FL-9 engines 487 and 485. (Reportedly, only 485, 486 & 487 were serviceable on that date.)

seats are reminiscent of airline seating, especially when the passenger in front reclines his seat into my lap.

The **Adirondack** has a different feel from the **Vermonter.** Perhaps this is because it links two of the largest (and, some say, least friendly) major cities in eastern North America. Or perhaps the crowded seating just makes passengers feel as though they are on a commuter train ... or, worse, an airliner. One wonders what could be done with a few of the long-distance Heritage coaches now in storage. Custom Class, anybody?

This train does have its own scenic delights. The route clings to the cliffs on the New York side of Lake Champlain for miles. We see historic Fort Ticonderoga in the distance, and admire the station at Fort Edward, complete with a large "D&H" sign proclaiming the railroad's heritage. At Saratoga Springs, CP continues to use the old Delaware and Hudson Yard; two ex-UP SD40-2 engines, still in ancestral yellow but with CP logos, prepare to head north to Montreal after we clear. I also get a look at the northbound **Adirondack,** Train 69. Genesis-2 engine 709 is missing its striping on its nose and most of its right side. It reminds me how odd these engines would look, were it not for their paint job.

The cramped seating finally convinces us to try out the lounge for a while. We are surprised to find it almost empty. Its interior is the same as it was in long-distance service on such trains as the **Silver Star** and **Montrealer,** but posters and artwork--the latter reproductions of charcoal drawings by an Amtrak trainman--decorate the walls. All are scenes and images from the route of the **Adirondack.** The lounge is comfortable and quiet, and we stay until after Schenectady.

Since our train has an F40, an engine change at Albany is mandatory. As soon as the head-end power is cut, I am off the train to see what locomotive has been assigned. What I see in the distance to the south is not the usual Genesis-2, but two FL9's, the 485 and 487. The **Adirondack** leaves Albany on time, and in style, with its 37-year old engines and 44-year old coaches. Only the lone Amcoach, itself already past 20 years old, isn't older than most of the passengers!

The new crew no longer calls the train by name, but the "5:40 to New York City". Our view of the Hudson River is glorious, even if the glare of the setting sun is powerful, given the lack of window shades in the Clocker coaches. These old cars do, however, ride very nicely at 90 mph. We spot the New York-Albany Turbo express (the only Turboliner still in service), a mere blur just outside Rhinecliff, where we detrain. Two passengers off, ten on, and train 68 is moving again. I savor the chant of the two old F units, knowing that this may be the last time.

"Why Rhinecliff?", asks the perky station agent after she learns that we are connecting to Train 49, the **Lake Shore Limited.** Dining car rules, that's why. The meal service hours for the **Lake Shore Limited** say that passengers must be scheduled to board by 8:45pm to be served in the dining car, and Rhinecliff is the last stop before that time.

Rhinecliff station is immaculate. The agent has been taking advantage of the time between trains to tidy up, and it has been worth it. The station is an old brick building, elevated above the tracks and perched on the steep cliff which gives the town its name. High, intricately patterned plaster ceilings and walls, and shiny wooden benches bespeak a classic old railroad station, the kind which, all too often, suffers from neglect and lack of maintenance. But here, the station interior gleams proudly.

Soon, passengers drift in for the **Lake Shore.** By the time number 49 arrives, ten minutes late due to Metro-North trackwork to the south, there are over a dozen people waiting to board. The **Lake Shore** makes three stops at Rhinecliff, because the train is long, and the lighted area of the platform is short: the first for short-haul passengers on the lead coach which is operated as Train 849; the second for long-haul coach riders; and the last, for those boarding the two Viewliner sleepers on the rear.

Deluxe Room B in car 4901 is clean and warm as we enter. Since our first Viewliner trip, we have learned how to store baggage in one of these cars and soon have everything put away. We find our bedtime sweet--two packages of cookies--and a Viewliner brochure on the vanity. When our attendant tells us the last dinner call is about to be made, we turn up the ventilating fan and lower the thermostat, to cool down the room while we are dining.

We are seated after just a few minutes waiting in the Amcafe car which serves as a lounge. Menus are one-page affairs printed up especially for the **Lake Shore.** Barbecued chicken is tender and tasty (a little messy, though) and my wife's Salisbury steak with mushrooms is just fine. After a slice of Amtrak's trademark apple pie, we are ready to relax in our room for a while.

The room is still warm. Apparently the thermostat doesn't work. It is not uncomfortable, with the help of copious quantities of air from the vents below the window. More troubling is the lack of hot water in both the vanity and shower. I check one of the compartments, before its occupant boards at Schenectady, and find no hot water there, either. I'll put off taking a shower until the next evening.

Sep 27: Early next morning at Cleveland, the sight of the new waterfront light rail line reminds us how far the city's revitalization has come. The **Lake Shore** is out 16mins late as we stroll forward through the coaches for breakfast, find the diner full, and leave our name with the lead attendant, who tells us to wait in the lounge.

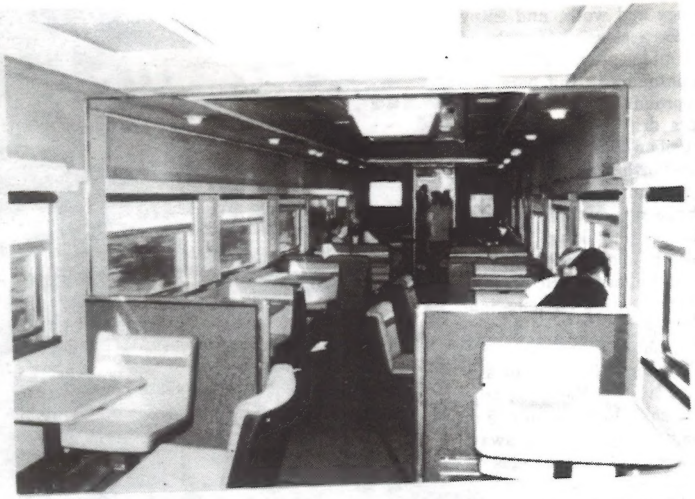
There are no seats. The Amfleet-II lounge, which came with the Boston section of the train, is standing-room-only with diner patrons. At Elyria, after 30mins, some names are called and we take a couple of dinette seats. We are past Sandusky when, over an hour after leaving our names, we finally claim a table in the diner.

The breakfast menu has the usual egg and French toast selections, plus a "Hearty Special", which turns out to be eggs, pancakes, choice of bacon, ham or sausage, and choice of potatoes or grits. Mine comes with both potatoes and grits, as the kitchen has these pre-made for faster service; if you want grits, they come in a bowl on the side, and the eggs are cooked any way you like them, as long as they are scrambled.

The Fort Edward NY former Delaware & Hudson station, on the route of the ADIRONDACK, on Sep 26.

The meal is reminiscent of the hurry-up dining on the Florida trains, and for good reason, as our **Lake Shore** carries as many passengers. Six coaches and three sleepers are all nearly full, and the load taxes the 48-seat diner to its limit. The final call for breakfast is after 10am.

A quick after-breakfast tour of the train finds the Boston sleeper full of cigarette smoke, while the no-smoking policy in the new Viewliners is strictly enforced. In the coaches I find a few copies of the **Lake Shore** route guide (nowhere to be seen in the sleeping cars), grabbing one before returning to our bedroom. But the scenery from here to Chicago is not Amtrak's best. Adding to the general gloom of a gray day is the uninspiring, at times dreary, countryside. Another season, another day may have made the surroundings more interesting. But today, it just seems like time for a nap. And why not? After all, even if the westbound **Lake Shore** lacks the scenic distinction of the eastbound trip, part of the reason for train travel is to take the time, and the chance, to simply relax.



Interior of cafeteria-lounge 3111, "L'Auberge Laurentian", on the ADIRONDACK on Sep 26.

The **Lake Shore** arrives in Chicago amid a flurry of announcements on the P.A. system, regarding our back-up move into the terminal, the Metropolitan Lounge, and the availability of Smarte-Carts for a dollar on the platform. I study the usual variety of equipment at the shops--four different models of road locomotives, countless variations on passenger cars (including the rare ex-Metroliner coaches with blanked-out cabs) and Amtrak's new Road Railers--before our train enters the dark recesses of the platform area, 27mins behind schedule. After we dodge past the Smarte-Cart racks and into the station, we open the door of the Metropolitan Lounge. What we see is a surprise.

The lounge is packed. Baggage crowds the area between the entry door and the reception counter. People are everywhere, and a fair number of them are circling around trying to find a seat. The hostess checks our ticket, hands us a lounge pass, and tells us to find a spot, the best we can. The best turns out to be in the waiting area for Metra commuter train passengers, next door.

The lounge is intended to be a privilege for first-class passengers but today coach riders actually have it better. I mentally compose a letter to Amtrak CEO Thomas Downs: "Dear Tom ... Dammit..." But this is Friday afternoon, and two of the quadweekly trains to the West are leaving today, both with extra sleeping cars. Perhaps one should not complain if the crowds mean much-needed first-class revenue for Amtrak.

At 2:45pm, 20mins before departure, we check back into the ever more crowded lounge, and find the conductor of our **California Zephyr,** checking in sleeping car passengers and taking tickets. The process isn't as smooth as it could be, as several passengers for the **Empire Builder,** due out 10mins after our train, are in line as well. The conductor also discovers that two parties are booked into the same room, and this difficulty is compounded because it is one of the special bedrooms, of which the train has only three. This delays us past our scheduled departure time of 3:05pm. In the meantime, the Amtrak station dispatcher, who needs our track for the **Southwest Chief,** re-routes that equipment to another platform. Finally, somebody accepts an economy room to Denver, the conductor gathers up all his paperwork, and the **Zephyr** heads west as we bid goodbye to Chicago from Room E, Car 0631.

The overcast has broken up, and the sun seems to tell us that this is going to be a good trip. Amtrak and the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe (somebody is going to have to find a better name) put on a great show on the multi-track line to Aurora which hosts Amtrak, Metra commuters, BNSF freight and UP (formerly SP) intermodal. We meet one of each at track speed, within 20mins. At Princeton, a banner proclaims the coming of the **Southwest Chief,** which now enters Chicago on this ex-Burlington line instead of its traditional Santa Fe trail.

At Galesburg, the **Zephyr** makes the first of many smoking stops, where the train pauses for a few minutes while smokers have a cigarette or two. Others compare the Superliners to Burlington steam locomotive No. 3006, on display beside the platform.

We have an early call for dinner, and it comes a few minutes after we leave Galesburg. This diner is staffed by some truly entertaining employees. One of them, Ed, leads passengers in what must be his favorite chant: "I promise to have dessert with every meal except breakfast!"

There is a little confusion, as there are two different menus in the diner: a few menus for the selections known as Cycle 3 have gotten mixed in with Cycle 2. But it doesn't matter much. Prime rib and roasted chicken are nearly perfect. We pass the dinner hour crossing the Mississippi and watching the sun set over Iowa.

The last call for dinner is made well before the scheduled 8:05pm stop at Ottumwa, where passengers are still supposed to be able to get dining car service. We later learn that Ottumwa passengers are offered a dinner seating immediately upon boarding the train. Incidentally, this is my first **Zephyr** trip in a long time where the station announcement did not mention that the fictional Radar O'Reilly of M*A*S*H came from Ottumwa.

Sep 26: Breakfast is running smoothly this morning. Passengers are seated without waiting, in a nearly-full car. While we dine, the Rockies with their first snow of the season, loom ever larger as **Zephyr** speeds toward Denver. We pass a passenger car rebuilder, and are fascinated by strings of sleepers, coaches, lounges and dome cars, in storage and awaiting a new life in excursion or dinner train service.

Arrival into Denver is well ahead of schedule, even after an extra backup move to pick up the private car "Los Angeles" on the rear end. We drop a mail car and then our engines are fueled and serviced, all in plenty of time for a punctual departure.

It is the last time we will be on schedule, and the delay is not Amtrak's fault. The **Zephyr** is no more than a minute en route when a BNSF coal train—an *empty* BNSF coal train—blocks the crossing with our westward main line. One hundred fifty cars and forty minutes pass before our journey finally resumes.

I miss the first part of the ascent of the Front Range. A passenger in our sleeper has left her two-year old in the room by himself, and he has managed to close the door and lock the safety catch. Mom, panicked, runs through the sleeper, shouting for help. I find the conductor in the crew lounge of the transition sleeper. Minutes later, the child, stark naked, is rescued with the help of a large prybar. By the time I return to our room, the train is already rounding the last of the Big Ten curves, which is lined with hopper cars permanently loaded with gravel as a buffer against high winds.

Ever since we cleared the BNSF crossing and the empty coal train, there has been no doubt as to what railroad we are on. The "UP dispatcher" reminds us that only two weeks and two days earlier, the purchase (it cannot really be called a merger) of Southern Pacific Lines by Union Pacific Corporation became a reality. We would now be on the rails of only one company, all the way to the Pacific coast. Even now, the takeover is made apparent by Union Pacific engines, mostly older SD-40-2 and GP38 units, mixed into motive power consists. No doubt all will be yellow before too long.

Most of the scenery on the line through Colorado is on the south side of the train, not ideal for deluxe bedroom passengers on a westbound trip. Of the canyons west of Moffat Tunnel, only Fraser is on the north side. We watch the most spectacular sights, all the way to

Special "ADIRONDACK" logo on the side of coach 7004 on the ADIRONDACK at Albany-Rensselaer NY Sep 26.

Ruby Canyon in the Utah-Colorado border area, from the corridor outside our room. One sight which we do have the opportunity to see, however, is the damage which has been done in the name of progress in Glenwood Canyon. The construction of Interstate Highway 70 has slashed giant gashes into the canyon wall. By comparison, the rail line--and, for that matter, what remains of the old highway--does little scenic damage to this once gorgeous example of canyon geology. The Interstate in Glenwood Canyon without doubt ranks among the most gross acts of civil engineering vandalism in the history of this nation.

Relief comes when the **Zephyr** makes another smoking stop at Glenwood Springs. The afternoon is warm, and many nonsmokers get out here, too. Glenwood once was an ideal place for Denver passengers to turn around for a day trip on the train, but the schedule no longer permits this. Nevertheless, a 65-person tour group from Denver detrains here, for an overnight stay before going back home on Sunday.

The afternoon is marked by two unusual occurrences. We meet three Amtrak trains between Granby and Glenwood Springs: a special movie train being operated near Dotsero, the eastbound **American Orient Express** trainset, running as an Amtrak extra, and the eastbound **California Zephyr.**

Then, after our departure from Glenwood Springs, sleeping car passengers are invited to a party in the dining car. Reminiscent of the Pacific Parlor on the **Coast Starlight**, this is a delightful chance to meet other sleeping car passengers over snacks and cool drinks. Our hosts are the three sleeping car attendants, who have borrowed the diner between meals.

And our attendant, Julius, deserves special mention. Attentive at every opportunity, he has brought fresh ice, juice, soda, and clean towels throughout the journey. Once, he asks us if we are absolutely sure that there isn't anything else he can do for us. Julius is certainly a contender for my single best all-time sleeping car attendant.

As the afternoon wanes, the **Zephyr** pauses at Grand Junction. This is another smoking stop, so I jump off and check out the model

train store at the east end of the platform. The station layout here is strange; the old Rio Grande Depot is no longer in use, blocked off by a chain-link fence while Amtrak occupies an undistinguished single-story building just to the west.

Our departure from Grand Junction begins the workday for one of the **Zephyr's** legends: the jackalope conductor. Taking over the P.A. just after leaving, he surprises the passengers by saying that we will be seeing giraffes, a dinosaur, and the Pillsbury doughboy during the next couple of hours. The giraffes materialize at a wild animal park near Fruita, and the dinosaur and doughboy are among the weird rock formations in Ruby Canyon. In this wild area, near dusk, the conductor begins to tell tales about the legendary jackalope which populates the region. Many eyes search the horizon for this mythical beast; at one point, he even shouts for us to look out the right side of the train, where a jackalope has just jumped over the engine and is running across the desert!

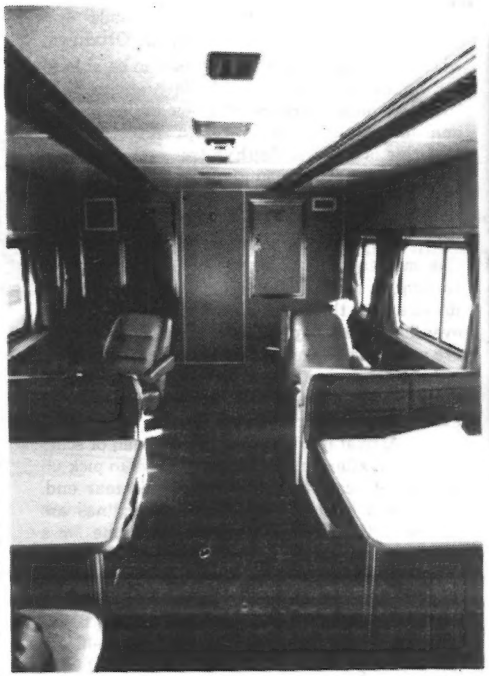
We don't see the jackalope, but enjoy ourselves anyway at dinner near Thompson. The train moves a little slower now as one of our locomotives has gone lame due to low cooling water. The problem is remedied at Thompson, for even though it is nothing more than a wide spot in the tracks, Thompson has water for the **Zephyr**.

This is where the jackalope conductor gets serious. Believing that an uninformed passenger is an unhappy passenger, he explains the mechanical problem and what will be done to fix it. By the time we are underway once more, nobody is complaining about the late running of the train.

Sep 29: We awaken in Nevada on what used to be UP-SP paired track west of Elko. We lost a total of an hour between the slow running with only one engine, and the extended stop at Thompson for water. So, as the train nears Sparks, the crew announces that the stop will be shortened so that we can make up time. I watch the crew change and the fueling of our engines, and then jump back on board, anticipating that we will be leaving shortly.

We don't. Because the train is longer than normal, the water hoses at the rear will not reach. It takes an extra twelve minutes to water the rear coach and private car. Whatever time we made up going into Sparks, we lose in the extra watering stop.

After taking on a good load of riders in Reno, the **Zephyr** snakes through the Truckee River Canyon and around Stanford's Curve, challenging the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada mountains. A narration, courtesy of the volunteers of the California Railroad Museum, helps explain the history of the Donner Pass line and the scenic highlights at trackside. Descending past Cisco, we are called to the diner for our lunch seating, which is by reservations made during breakfast. This final meal of our trip is



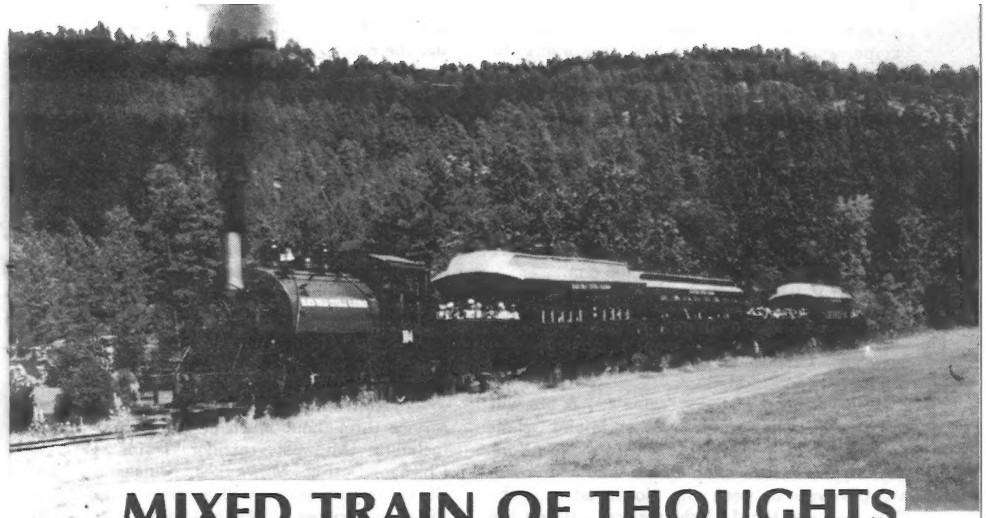
The crew's lounge in a Superliner II transition-dorm-sleeper on train 5 at Denver on Sep 28. The lounges are usually messier.

unusual, as the lead attendant offers a few remaining dinner entrees in addition to the regular lunch menu. Finishing off an oven-roasted chicken, I then attempt to order dessert. Waiter Ed has almost been too successful; the desserts have nearly sold out. He leads the diner in one last chant for the trip: "There is no more pie and no more ice cream!" So, I have a piece of cake.

At Sacramento, a few passengers for the 5:45pm **Capitol** mistakenly board our train. No problem, decides the conductor, as long as they are not going to Berkeley, where we do not stop. Though rules do not permit this, it makes no sense to leave with empty seats if there are passengers ready to ride.

While we prepare to detrain at Martinez, the conductor begins a story about the mothball fleet at Suisun Bay, and especially about the spy ship, **Glomar Explorer,** which is stored here. He then poses the question, as to why the mothball fleet was placed in this particular spot. He says to think about it for a while, and then calls the Martinez stop.

We say farewell to our fellow riders in car 0531, and then wish a special goodbye to Julius, who then opens the door one more time for a last friendly wave as the **Zephyr,** its station work done, slides away. The answer to the question about the mothball fleet will have to wait for the next trip. And, with any luck, it will be as pleasant a journey as this one has been.



MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

The Black Hills Central Railroad operates steam excursions over its ex-CB&Q branch line between Hill City and Keystone SD in the scenic Black Hills area in the western part of the state near Mount Rushmore. The 20-mile roundtrip excursions run through very remote and scenic areas, and include a climb up a 6% grade. The tourist line has two steam locomotives on its roster: No. 7, a 2-6-2 built by Baldwin in 1919, and No. 104, a 2-6-2 tank engine built by Baldwin in 1926. Between mid-May and September, four trains are operated daily, with a fewer number during the non-peak season. Due to the popularity of these trains, they are frequently sold out in advance, so reservations are highly recommended. This is the excursion train on Sep 13 returning from Keystone to Hill City with locomotive 104 pulling six cars. The train was completely sold out. Photo and text by Alex Mayes.

Amtrak issued the following press release concerning the Florida service and the startup of the **Silver Palm** on Oct 22:

JACKSONVILLE, Fla,, Oct. 22, 1996 -- In response to a growing travel market in several areas along the New York-Carolinas-Florida route, Amtrak is restructuring its Silver Service and adding a third train, the Silver Palm, effective Nov. 10. This revamped service will offer Amtrak customers more choices between the Northeast and the Carolinas; the Carolinas and Florida; and within Florida, particularly between Tampa and Miami.

In addition, passengers will continue to enjoy the comfort of the recently introduced Viewliner sleeping cars and improved and expanded food service in both the lounge and dining cars. Each of the three trains, the Silver Palm, Silver Star and Silver Meteor, will operate over slightly different routes in the Carolinas and Florida. The three trains will depart New York City and Miami every day, in the morning, midday and evening, The southbound trains will arrive in Miami by late morning, late afternoon and mid-evening. Northbound trains will arrive in New York mid-morning, late afternoon and late evening.

"This restructuring will offer a number of new possibilities for our Amtrak customers," said Dennis Hale, Silver Service Product Manager. "Passengers will have better schedules to meet their travel needs while these trains will offer more personal service from our on-board staff."

The new Silver Palm (Trains #89 & 90) will provide direct Amtrak service between Miami and Tampa and continue northbound to Jacksonville, Charleston, Fayetteville, Washington, DC, and New York. In Addition to the new Tampa-Miami daylight service, the Silver Palm will also provide daylight service from the Northeast to the Carolinas and overnight service from the Carolinas to Florida. The southbound Silver Palm will leave New York at 7:45 a.m., depart Fayetteville at 5:55 p.m., leave Charleston at 9:17 p.m., depart Tampa the next day at 6.30 a.m. and arrive in Miami at 11:45 a.m. The northbound Silver Palm will leave Miami at 6:30 p.m., depart Tampa at 11:50 p.m., leave Charleston the next day at 9:06 a.m., depart Fayetteville at 12:26 p.m. and arrive in NY at 11:09 p.m.

The current Silver Star (Trains #81/91 & 82/92) operates as a combined service between New York, Raleigh, N.C., Columbia, S.C. and

Jacksonville with one section continuing to Tampa and the other section continuing to Orlando and Miami. The new Silver Star (Trains #91 & 92) will retain its New York-Raleigh-Columbia-Jacksonville route. The southbound Silver Star will leave New York at 11:50 a.m., depart Raleigh at 10:14 p.m., arrive in Orlando the next day at 11:16 a.m. and arrive in Miami At 4:15 p.m. The northbound Silver Star will depart Miami at 11:30 a.m., leave Orlando at 5:00 p.m., depart Raleigh the next day at 5:51 a.m. and arrive in New York at 4:05 p.m.

At Raleigh, Amtrak will offer customers a new daily connection between the Silver Star and the Piedmont (Trains #73 & 74) for travel between Greensboro and Charlotte and destinations in Florida.

The Silver Meteor (Trains #91 & 98) will continue its current route between Miami Orlando, Charleston, Washington, D.C., and New York with improved operating times that offer overnight service between the Northeast and the Carolinas and the daylight service between the Carolinas and Florida. The Silver Meteor will depart New York At 7:05 p.m., leave Charleston at 8:05 a.m., depart Orlando at 3:54 p.m., and arrive in Miami At 9:35 p.m. Northbound, the Silver Meteor will depart Miami at 7:20 a.m., Orlando at 12:51 p.m., Charleston at 8:35 p.m. and arrive in New York the next day at 9:45 a.m.

The popular Viewliner sleeping car, recently introduced on the Silver Service and operating on other eastern long-distance trains since spring, will be available on all three trains. Receiving rave reviews from customers, the new Viewliner is attractive, quiet and comfortable with a double row of windows to effortlessly capture America's rolling panorama. The first hnw single-level sleeping car in 40 years, the cars offer high-tech features such as individual climate controls, in-room video monitors and stereo audio entertainment systems. Other amenities include wider upper berths more in-room luggage storage, showers in deluxe bedrooms and a shower room for compartment passengers.

Dining car and lounge service enhancements introduced on the Silver Service in March will continue with even more improvements. The regional foods will continue on both a full-meal and on an a la carte basis. Gourmet-To-Go, which offers customers the option of eating in the diner or "taking out" will be maintained. Dining car interiors are being upgraded with new colors and seating while customers will enjoy dining service which features table linens, fresh cut flowers, china and crystal.

Many stations along the Silver Service routes have also been upgraded. Several projects have been made possible by state partners such as Florida, which has assisted in funding the expansion and renovation of the Jacksonville station, the construction of a new Lakeland station, improvements to the Hollywood station and the restoration of the historic Tampa Union Station. North Carolina partnered in the renovation of the Fayetteville, Rocky Mount and Wilson stations. Amtrak recently moved into a new facility at Florence, S.C., thanks to community efforts. Amtrak has also completed work at Charleston, S.C., Savannah, Ga., Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., and Miami.

"An important part of our 1997 business plan is the deployment of our limited assets in the best growth markets,' said Mark S. Cane, president of the Amtrak Intercity business unit. "We will continue building the market to and from the Northeast, the Carolinas and Florida, while developing a new intrastate route in Florida."

Amtrak Intercity operates passenger rail service throughout much of the United States, including Midwest corridor trains for the Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Kansas City and St. Louis markets as well as most Amtrak long distance services. Headquartered in Chicago, Amtrak Intercity employs nearly 6,000 people in 39 states and is one of three Amtrak strategic business units... [End of press release.]

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Stray barges still pose a hazard to railroading, despite all the efforts of federal, state and railroad officials after the tragic **Sunset Ltd** accident in Alabama. The latest: On Oct 4, winds from tropical storm Josephine pushed a barge into a CSX bridge that spans the Rigolets east of New Orleans. The bridge span was shoved several feet out of alignment; this problem could probably have been repaired rather quickly by jacking the span back into place and stabilizing it, but the barge was wedged under it, the water rose and 600 feet of the track and supporting structure were severely damaged. So the New Orleans-Mobile main line was closed for a week.

Ironically, the **Gulf Coast Ltd** had just been given the green light by Congress to keep running, but it was annulled from Oct 5 through Oct 12. The **Sunset Ltd**, however, continued to run, but on a detour not before attempted by Amtrak. On Oct 5 the westbound train 1 ran on the IC Railroad from Mobile to Hattiesburg MS, thence to new Orleans on NS, route of the **Crescent**. To accomplish this feat, the train was backed through CSX's Siebert Yard north of Mobile, then meandered through to connect with the IC. The route to Hattiesburg is 96 miles of 45mph or slower running. At Hattiesburg, the Amtrak engines were removed and moved via a connecting track to the NS. A switcher then pulled the train west on the IC and shoved it down south to the Amtrak engines. Then the train ran backwards the 115 miles to New Orleans. There the train, which usually goes around a wye and backs into the station, headed in and was then positioned correctly to go west. (Engines are changed here, so the westbound engines back in and departed, leaving the power from Miami to be sent to the engine shop.) The eastbound **Sunset** maneuvered through the same, but opposite process. The delay for the **Sunset** on this detour was about four hours in each direction; however, on Oct 8 train 2 was about eight hours late, having lost more time in a collision in rural Louisiana with a rice truck. An engine crew member was injured in that accident. The first detoured eastbound **Sunset** carried 310 passengers, many who had traveled from Jacksonville on the first westbound detour, to New Orleans for the Saints /Jaguars football game. The sleepers were full and the diner served dinner until midnight.

—Adron Hall.

Nov 10 Amtrak system timetables are expected to be late in delivery due to the late changes caused by Congress funding continuation of the hit-list trains. Plans are being developed to provide Thruway bus service from Sanford FL to major hotels in Orlando. Run properly, this shuttle service could offer a real passenger convenience. The three Florida trains will offer the same number of coach seats as the two existing trains, but the number of sleeping rooms will be about half the present. Each train will carry only two Viewliner sleepers. One can expect early sellouts and higher accommodation charges. The **Empire Builder** is presently running four sleepers—two each to Seattle and Portland. Maricopa AZ should become a **Sunset** stop by spring 97. A new Thruway bus service Nov 10 will be operated Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo-Salinas, connecting at San Jose with **Capitol** trains 724-725. —Ed Von Nordeck.

Assuming that Clinton will be re-elected, NARP advised that "People should tell Clinton that the following things must happen early in the new administration: that Amtrak needs an authorization bill with measure making its operations more economical; that states must have flexibility under ISTEA to invest in passenger rail projects; that Amtrak needs a half-cent of the gas tax for capital investment; and that Amtrak must get a good 1998 appropriation. Particularly, the operating grant must be high enough to avoid the mess we have faced this year with discontinued routes".

CSX announced on Oct 15 that it plans to acquire Conrail. The following week Norfolk Southern made an 8%-higher counteroffer for Conrail. On Nov 19 the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee will hold hearings on this. NARP said that a federal DOT official expressed alarm about the "increased pace of mergers in recent years". He said that "We've been concerned for some time about the amazing implosion of the railroad industry".

IC3 Flexliner trainsets have been withdrawn temporarily from revenue service on VIA in Ontario, as they have not been properly actuating the signal system and grade crossing warnings. No such problems arose in U.S. usage.

Texas Senator Hutchison wrote in the Dallas Morning News Oct 13 that it's important for states to act to save the trains threatened for discontinuance in May 97. She added that it's also important for Congress to save the Amtrak system, noting the need for the half-cent gas tax and labor reform. NARP said it's important for rail advocates to tell state officials they must take action to keep those trains running through all of 1997. "Keeping the trains running in the short run must take precedence over states' feelings that the federal government is treating them unfairly. There are no guarantees that the federal government will act again to keep these trains running, but actions taken by the states could make all the difference." NARP held a board of directors' meeting in St. Louis in Oct.

The last new Superliners should be delivered by the end of Oct—one coach and two transition dorm-sleepers. By the end of Dec, all the Viewliners should be on hand.

The Heritage Foundation, an anti-Amtrak think tank, distributed in Oct a column to newspapers unfairly attacking the planned Boston to Portland ME service.

The first new GE P42 loco was delivered to Amtrak the first week of Oct, with a ceremony at Altoona PA. The P42 is a more powerful version of the P40 (AMD-103), and Amtrak is getting 98 of them. These engines will not have the fadeout stripes near the rear that the P40s have.

USA Today editorialized Oct 1 against the half-cent gas tax for Amtrak. The paper said the gas tax should all go to fix roads. On the other hand, the Surface Transportation Policy Project has a new paper, "Crying Wolf—the false crisis of America's crumbling roads and bridges and why special interest highway lobbyists like it that way". Though these interests talk about crumbling roads and bridges, STPP said road conditions have actually improved, and 44% of ISTEA road funds in 1994-5 went to building new roads or lanes. Obtain the report for $10—call Sonia Jubar at STPP, 202-939-3470.

National radio veteran talk show host Bruce Williams said last month that he had been in Lorton VA in August as the northern terminus of an **Auto Train** trip he had taken. He did not elaborate further. Can an **American Orient Express** itinerary be far behind?

Dept. of corrections: On p.5 the six column headings should read: (year-to-date) 1996 actual, 1996 budget, 1995 actual; (August) 1996 actual, 1996 budget, 1995 actual. All figures are in millions of dollars.

In RTN 554, p. 6, it is not Colfax but Auburn that has its east- and westbd tracks separated.

THE OPEN VESTIBULE

It appears that three minor corrections to RTN 550 are called for.

Page 6: Seattle's Metro Transit is far from owning the most buses with 1700. Quoting NYC Transit's Dept of Buses 1996 Insider's Guide, NYC Transit has 3554; MTA Los Angeles 2294; CTA Chicago 2104; and NJ Transit New Jersey 1867 (source: Jane's Urban Transport 1995-6).

Page 10 states that service willl begin July 10 on the Waterfront Line light rail service in Cleveland. This may be correct, but I have a timetable effective June 30 including the Waterfront Line operating as an extension of the Shaker Line, with about half the Shaker trips continuing on to the Waterfront Line, not operating as a separate line. [Nevertheless, the Waterfront Line did open July 10; see RTN 551—Ed.]

Page 19 states NortheastDirect train 170 to Boston is the only NEDirect train without food service for coaches. This is untrue. All Washington-Boston trains have café car service for all passengers. It is the NY-Washington trains which presently have no food service—and no club service either. It would make no sense to serve food to just 18 club passengers and deny it to hundreds of coach passengers. The club section is partitioned from the common people by a red curtain, and is placed at the end of the train so that coach passengers do not have to pass through the club section of the car to access the café counter. The club passengers are served at their seats.

E. Everett Edwards
Doylestown, Pennsylvania

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Well over a year ago, George Loulan asked me to review and comment on the attached memo from Andrew Selden of the United Rail Passenger Alliance. With the assistance of Senator McCain's office, I have now obtained sufficient financial information from Amtrak to do so.

Selden states that Amtrak's total federal operating subsidy for FY 1994 was $351 million. He then asserts that the NE Corridor incurred an operating loss of $260 million plus an allocation of $105 million of overhead costs common to the Amtrak system. From this he concludes that the NEC operating loss of between $260 and $365 million consumed at least 74% and possibly 104% of the entire federal operating subsidy of $351 million. "In the latter case, *no federal subsidy dollars could have gone to non-NEC train operations.*" Selden adds that non-NEC trains may have incurred an operating deficit of $60 million which Amtrak covered from its own financial reserves.

The fallacy in this reasoning is Selden's assumption that Amtrak's operating loss for 1994 was $411 million, measured by the operating subsidy of $351 million plus $60 million of its own reserves. However, as shown by the accompanying summary of Amtrak financial results for FY 1994, its operating loss was not $411 million but $694 million.

FY 1994 Actual	NEC	Intercity	West	Parent	Total
Revenue and State Contributions	717	404	144	148	1,413
Expenses (Including Depreciation)	1,048	632	249	317	2,246
Operating Profit/(Loss)	(331)	(228)	(105)	(169)	(833)
RRTA contributions	71	42	16	10	139
Net Loss before Federal Subsidies	(260)	(186)	(89)	(159)	(694)

Assuming that Selden correctly allocates $105 million of the common (Parent) expenses to NEC, the bottom line reads as follows:

	NEC	IC + West	Total Amtrak
Revenues (including state + RRTA $$)	788	606	1394
Expenses (including depreciation)	1048	881	1929
OPERATING LOSS	(260)	(275)	(535)
Allocation of net common expenses (Parent)	(105)	(54)	(159)
NET LOSS BEFORE FEDERAL SUBSIDIES	(365)	(329)	(694)
Operating ratio (expenses/revenues)	146%	154%	150%

This it is seen the NE Corridor and all other Amtrak [routes] perform about equally (badly) from a financial point of view: There is no more warrant for allocating all of the $351 million federal operating subsidy to the Northeast than there is to allocate it all to Intercity + West.

One might ask, what accounts for the $343 million difference between Amtrak's net loss and the federal subsidy? $265 million of operating expenses was for non-cash items, primarily depreciation. Keep in mind that Amtrak's inability to cover depreciation means that it will be dependent upon future subsidies to finance capital expenditures. $78 million was raised by deferring vendor obligations and by short-term borrowing.

The above figures are for Amtrak as a corporation. They include quite a few things not directly related to performance of intercity passenger service, such as NEC freight track rentals, contract commuter operations, interest income, etc. Amtrak also accounts for the results of its intercity train operations on a "product line" basis, breaking out expenses between train-related, route-related and system-related. FY 1995 figures are shown in the adjoining table.

This report presents the NE Corridor on a more favorable basis than the total corporate figures. If only train-related costs are considered, NEC shows a profit of around $100 million, while the others show substantial losses. The route and system costs are primarily related to fixed infrastructure. It follows that if public funds continued to be available to support "below the rail" costs, NEC would be a candidate for privatization, while the others would not.

We must remember that the substantial amounts of tax money benefiting other modes of intercity transportation go almost entirely to fixed infrastructure. The government does not buy airplanes or intercity buses, and the amount of operating subsidy is minimal compared to Amtrak..

Anthony Haswell
Tucson, Arizona.

National Railroad Passenger Corporation
RPS Line by Line
FY 1995
($ in Millions)

	Total NEC	Total IC	Total West	Total Amtrak
Train Revenue	431.5	442.7	92.7	966.9
Special Train Revenue	0.6	1.9	0.1	2.6
Total Train Revenue	432.1	444.6	92.8	969.5
Product Line Direct	96.6	215.1	35.5	347.2
Total Train Makeup	86.8	149.6	24.5	260.9
Total Transportation	8.8	55.3	10.6	74.7
M/E Heavy Repairs	7.3	21.5	3.9	32.7
M/E Wreck & Accident Repair	(0.7)	0.2	0.0	(0.4)
Marketing/Sales Support	79.6	88.1	25.5	193.2
Procurement/Purchasing	1.6	1.2	0.6	3.4
Insurance	18.2	37.0	5.6	60.8
Rolling Stock Depreciation	32.9	63.1	11.1	107.1
Train Related Costs	331.1	631.5	118.3	1,080.8
Special Train Train Costs	0.6	0.8	0.07	1.5
Total Train Related Costs	331.7	632.3	118.3	1,082.3
Route Stations	0.8	18.4	5.6	24.8
Shared Stations	42.8	37.7	10.6	91.0
Total Maintenance of Way	61.5	24.1	2.3	87.9
Depreciation	100.0	14.5	1.0	115.5
Computer/Police/Interest/Taxes	26.1	61.7	12.7	100.5
Transportation - Amtrak	76.9	119.2	33.8	229.9
Route Related Costs	308.1	275.6	66.0	649.6
Special Train Route Costs	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.27
Total Route Related Costs	308.2	275.7	66.0	649.9
Total Train & Route Costs	639.8	907.9	184.4	1,732.1
System Related Costs	42.2	37.8	11.6	91.7
Special Train System Costs	0.06	(0.0)	(0.0)	0.0
Total System Related Costs	42.3	37.8	11.6	91.7
Total Train, Route, & System Costs	682.1	945.7	196.0	1,823.8
Total Profit (Loss)	(250.0)	(501.1)	(103.2)	(854.3)